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Viewing cable 06MANAGUA2277, DETAILS ON THE PROCESS OF THE ELECTRONIC

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#06MANAGUA2277**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06MANAGUA2277	2006-10-13 21:30	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Managua

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758456.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758467.aspx>
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<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3966/la-ldquo-injerencia-rdquo-de-ee-uu-en-el-2006>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-23/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2758764.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-23/Mundo/NotaPrincipal/Mundo2758753.aspx>
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<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2757239.aspx>
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<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3968/pellas-pronostico-a-eeuu-victoria-de-ortega-en-2006>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3967/barreto-era-ldquo-fuente-confiable-rdquo-para-eeuu>

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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 002277

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/05/2026
TAGS: [KDEM](#) [NU](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#)
SUBJECT: DETAILS ON THE PROCESS OF THE ELECTRONIC
TRANSMISSION OF VOTE RESULTS

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: POL TDYer recently met with officials from the local phone company (Enitel) and the Supreme Electoral Council (CSE) to seek clarification on the process whereby the vote tallies will be electronically submitted to the CSE on election day. Each of Nicaragua's 158 municipalities will host a Municipal Counting Center (CCM) staffed by Enitel technicians who will electronically scan the official tally sheets and send the results to a central CSE processing center in Managua. Enitel is closely collaborating with the CSE and will mobilize over 80% of its workforce to ensure a smooth process. In addition to allowing many of its branch offices to serve as CCMs, Enitel will also field teams of technicians across the country who can be called in to help solve any technical problems that might arise. Both Enitel and the CSE are confident that sufficient checks and balances within the system will minimize the chances of manipulation of the vote during this component of the process. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) POL TDYer met with a member of the Supreme Electoral Council (CSE) and executives with the local telephone company, Enitel, to better understand the process by which the final election tallies from each voting table (JRV) will be electronically transmitted to the CSE on election day. This critical component of the electoral process has not received much attention in the press, although local editorialists and other pundits appear skeptical on the transparency of the process. A few contacts have warned Embassies that this process is vulnerable to disruption either intentionally (i.e. via sabotage or partisan manipulation) or accidentally (i.e. power outages). To shed some light on these issues POL TDYer met with Enitel's Chief Country Executive David Ibarra (on 2 October), Enitel Director of Operations Luis Perey (3 October), and with CSE Chief of Staff Rodrigo Barreto (4 October).

A WORD ON GENERAL CSE PREPARATIONS

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¶3. (SBU) Barreto provided an overview of the CSE's preparations for transporting electoral materials and personnel on election day. He confirmed that there will be a total of 11,274 voting tables (JRVs) in 4,296 voting centers around the country. Barreto reported that the number of JRVs is high because the CSE has worked to ensure that no Nicaraguan will have to travel more than 5 kilometers from home to cast their vote. He noted that this coverage has been difficult and expensive to manage, but that the CSE has been largely successful in coordinating, in conjunction with the military, a wide transportation network to support the process. According to a statistical chart provided by Barreto, the huge vehicle fleet includes 665 large trucks, 785 light trucks, 645 buses, and 112 mini-buses. To ensure

that materials can be adequately delivered to hard-to-reach locales, the CSE reported that it will employ 33 helicopters, 107 canoes, and 1,991 beasts of burden (i.e. mules).

(COMMENT: It is unclear how the CSE will employ 33 helicopters when, according to to DAO and RSO, respectively, the Nicaraguan military has approximately 24 helicopters of which only 40-50% are operational and the police have no helicopters. END COMMENT.) The CSE will begin packaging election materials between 16 and 22 October, and distributed using the various transportation means between 27 and 30 October. While the results from each JRV will be electronically sent to the CSE, the vehicles will also be responsible for transporting the hardcopy ballots and associated paperwork back to the CSE.

PREPARING RESULTS FOR ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

14. (SBU) Upon the completion of the voting process, each JRV will begin counting the results. A step-by-step guide (Paso a Paso) of JRV procedures published by the CSE establishes clear guidelines for how the final tallies are registered and transmitted to the central CSE processing center in Managua. According to the guide, once all the ballots have been counted by the JRV, the valid, annulled, and unused ballots are packaged separately, sealed, and labeled. These are then placed in a bag marked "electoral packet," which is in turn sealed. On the outside of the bag is affixed a copy of the official tally sheet (or acta). Once the ballots have been sealed, the JRV president is responsible for personally delivering the official acta to the Municipal Computing Center (CCM) where it will be scanned and electronically transmitted to the CSE. While Post was originally told by an OAS contact that only the ballots for the presidential

election were to undergo this process, Barreto and Perey reported that all the final tallies from each of the four races (president, national-level National Assembly candidates, regional Assembly candidates, and members of the Central American Parliament) will be submitted this way.

15. (SBU) Barreto explained that the JRV President will be accompanied to the CCM by the other members of the JRV and the fiscales. Barreto and the Enitel officials commented wryly that this is often a humorous sight as all of these officials - seven or eight of them - typically insist on riding in the same vehicle. Once at the CCM, however, only the JRV President will be allowed inside. He will then turn the acta over to an Enitel technician who will then, in the presence of the JRV President, scan the document and transmit it to the CSE. Ibarra and Perey noted that admittance to the office (which in most cases will be one of Enitel's regional offices) is restricted to the JRV leader in order to ensure that order is maintained.

16. (C) POL TDYer queried both Barreto and Perey whether it would be possible for the JRV president to swap out the official acta for a manipulated one while temporarily out of sight from the rest of the JRV. Both officials thought this unlikely and Barreto explained that there is a control in place to prevent this from happening. He noted that after sending the acta over the wire, the technician will print and give to the JRV President a confirmation copy of the document that was sent. The other JRV members and fiscales will be able to demand to see this once the JRV president leaves the CCM. These officials will be able to check to make sure the numbers and signatures match up to the original sheet.

MUNICIPAL COMPUTING CENTERS

17. (SBU) Each of the country's 158 municipalities will have a CCM. Most are located in the local Enitel office, with the exception of some 60 municipalities where Enitel has no presence. In these locations, the transmission hardware (i.e. computers, scanners, or faxes) will be installed in one

of the local voting centers. Enitel technicians will be on hand at all 158 centers and will be responsible for scanning and submitting the results. Ibarra and Perey assured POL TDYer that their personnel will be equipped to deal with any equipment problems that may arise. In addition, those CCMs located in Enitel offices will have independent sources of electricity (i.e. generators) that will enable them to send the information in the event of a power outage. Perey noted that the phone connection at all of the CCMs has already been tested three times to ensure they are functioning, and that the sites will be retested a couple days before the election.

18. (SBU) Most of the actas will be scanned and then sent via encrypted channels to the CSE where they will be un-encoded and processed. Perey noted, however, that a few of the CCMs will use a fax instead because logistical challenges associated with operating the more complicated scanning hardware in some areas. Perey enthusiastically claimed that use of the scanners in the majority of the locations will improve the overall electoral process. He noted that in previous elections the primary means of transmission was via fax, which can occasionally be problematic because some documents inevitably arrive with smudges or formatting irregularities. A scanned document on the other hand, provides a clean and clear image - which will prove useful by those scrutinizing the process (i.e. checking signatures and reading handwritten numbers).

THE ACTA

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19. (U) Barreto gave POL TDYer a copy of the actas that will be scanned and transmitted on election day. It is a single-sided sheet on paper slightly larger than a legal pad. There are four separate tables for each of the four races on the page. Each of these charts allot spaces to record the number of votes received by the political parties. There is also a specified area to register how many votes from each party were annulled or challenged. At the bottom of the page are spaces for the three JRV members and five fiscales (one from each party) to print their names, identification (cedula) numbers, and signatures. By signing the document these members signify their agreement with the results.

ENITEL MOBILIZING PERSONNEL, MATERIALS TO SUPPORT ELECTION

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110. (SBU) Perey noted that Enitel is mobilizing 600 employees around the country to help with the elections - some 80% of the total Enitel workforce. In addition, the company will have mobile technical teams around the country that will be able to handle technical or mechanical problems beyond the means of the CCM Enitel technicians. These teams can provide backup generators or shore up missing telephone wires. In the event that telephone wires are missing (i.e. stolen) or damaged, these teams will be able to install new wire, or create a temporary patch that would enable the connection to be made. Ibarra said these teams should be able to respond to calls in a matter of hours.

111. (SBU) Some contacts have speculated to Emboffs that the election could be disrupted by the theft of telephone wires, but it appears that Enitel and the CSE are aware of this problem and taking steps to head it off. Ibarra acknowledged that cable theft has spiked in the last few months because international copper prices have increased by over 300% -- thieves are cutting down telephone wires and removing the copper elements for sale on the black market. He expressed frustration that the judicial sector was not imposing sufficiently stiff penalties for the crime and noted that in August there were 500 cases of wire theft; while 300 suspects were apprehended, they are all back on the street. Enitel has asked the government to talk judges into holding cable thieves at least until after the election. Barreto reported that police and/or military officials will be providing

security in the areas around the CCMs, which could help to decrease the likelihood of these thefts impacting the CCM.

ELECTRICITY ISSUES STILL A CHALLENGE

¶12. (C) While many of the CCMs will be able to function in the event of a power outage thanks to backup generators, Barreto said he is still concerned that a lack of electricity could still complicate matters. Those CCMs not located in Enitel offices may not have generators to send in the results, not to mention guaranteed lighting. Barreto strongly criticized President Enrique Bolanos whom he said had told him in a recent meeting that he (the President) could not guarantee continuous power on election day. Barreto said that the CSE is doing its utmost to offset this potential problem, including providing candles or lanterns to some centers.

MANAGUA STADIUM PLAN DRAWING COMPLAINTS FROM ALN

¶13. (C) The CSE has announced that the National stadium located in Managua will be used as a CCM for JRVs in the city that do not have capabilities to send the data on their own. Perey noted that thirty computers will be set up in the stadium and said the process will look much the same as it does elsewhere, with JRV presidents arriving to send the final actas. The ALN, however, has expressed concern that because there are over 4,000 JRVs in Managua, use of the stadium as a focal point for so many voting tables could result in disorder, which, in turn, could lead to errors or other problems.

CSE TO STICK TO THE LETTER OF THE LAW

¶14. (C) Barreto expressed frustration that the CSE is put in a difficult position of having to follow an electoral code that is admittedly deficient and partisan. He is tired, however, of the CSE being made out by the press as incompetent, or worse, corrupt. Barreto argued that the CSE is often criticized for backing the stronger political parties (i.e. the PLC or FSLN), but that in reality the CSE has no choice but to enforce the laws and rules, many of which were established by those very parties. For instance, he characterized as unfounded recent MRS claims that the CSE was acting illegally by not distributing the third member of the JRV positions equally among the remaining political parties (the top two slots go to the parties that led the previous elections). He asserted that the law does not state that the distribution has to be even (COMMENT: It does not stipulate that it should be uneven, either. END COMMENT.).

¶15. (C) Barreto made no attempt to justify the existing rules and admitted that some are unfair. That said, he criticized the MRS for being too "weak" and said that parties that are unable to field observers or fiscales to all of the voting sites have no right to complain about potential fraud. He pointed out that the MRS was only able to nominate candidates for about 50% of the slots open to political parties (i.e. fiscales, JRV members, and suplentes). Interestingly, he added that this was the first election in which the PLC has been unable to field members in all of the positions available to them. Barreto characterized the FSLN as the most prepared and organized of the political parties.

FSLN TO RELY ON DIRTY BUT LEGAL TACTICS

¶16. (C) Barreto was confident that the CSE has constructed a very tight procedure that makes fraud difficult. That said, he noted that the better prepared political parties - he

referred specifically to the FSLN - would be able to take advantage of deficiencies or loopholes within the law to manipulate a favorable outcome. He said the Sandinistas know the legalities of the code inside and out because they have used their influence in the electoral council to create the laws. He claimed the Sandinistas already have teams of lawyers ready to jump into action immediately after the vote to influence the challenge-resolution process, as evidenced by the FSLN's ability to win Granada in the 2004 municipal elections. Barreto noted that the Sandinistas have succeeded with this strategy in the past and he expects the FSLN will employ these tactics in November. Thus, his concern was not that the FSLN would 'steal' the election, but that it could manipulate the results in its favor using entirely legal means.

¶17. (C) COMMENT: While these meetings did not yield definitive proof that the electronic transmission process will be free of manipulation, it appears that there are several checks and balances in place. END COMMENT.
TRIVELLI